

THE BOND OF THE COVENANT NO. 1840

A SERMON
DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1885,
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

“And I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, says the LORD God. And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant: And I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me: I will bring them forth out of the country where they sojourn, and they shall not enter into the land of Israel: and you shall know that I am the LORD.”

Ezekiel 20:34-38.

THIS striking utterance was given forth by that renowned seer Ezekiel, at the time when the Israelites, scattered in every country, had begun to forget their nationality. They judged it prudent and wise as much as possible to disguise their distinctive character, and melt their race into the Babylonian or Chaldean, and become like the heathen. Now God, who chose His people of old, would not have it so, and He interposed with this striking passage—“And that which comes into your mind shall not be at all, that you say, we will be as the heathen, as the families of the countries, to serve wood and stone.”

The Lord tells them that He had them for a people, and He meant to hold them for a people. Whether they delighted in it or not, He would not let them go. He pronounced a solemn oath concerning them—“As I live, says the LORD God, surely with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out, will I rule over you.” They shall no more become Babylonians than of old He would suffer them to become Egyptians.

This passage which I have taken for a text may very truthfully be regarded as a threatening of terrible judgment upon erring Israel, as much as if the Lord had said, “You of the house of Israel, whom I have made to be the type of My spiritual people, you shall be Mine; and if you wander from Me, I will distinguish you by special punishments, therefore I now threaten you with special judgments. If you will attempt to mix yourselves up with the Gentiles, I will deal with you with a startling severity, such as I have never shown unto the heathen. Your sins are greater, and your privileges greater, and so shall your chastisements be greater. You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

Dear friends, it is a dreadful thing to profess to belong to the people of God. It is a matter of great privilege if it is true, but if it is a lie it is an awful thing, involving sevenfold judgment. God will cause His professing people to be distinguished from other men, and they that come in among them, who are not truly of them, shall be so dealt with that both the ears of him that hears thereof shall tingle. Special severities will overtake apostate professors, therefore, they had better know what they are doing.

You cannot trifle with the Christian faith, you cannot be a traitor and quietly glide away. You shall be marked as the son of perdition, you shall be known like Judas, as one for whom it would have been better that he had never been born. A profession of Christianity, without the real possession of it, will turn out to be a mantle of fire to him who puts it on. Such is the run of this passage.

But at the same time, reading between the lines, and considering the verses very carefully, another reading is suggested. God, if He does not show distinguishing judgment, will display distinguishing

grace. Without twisting the passage at all, I will use the whole of it as setting forth that peculiar favor which God intends to exhibit towards His own chosen, and of which they shall be the subjects, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

I see within this black cloud of threatening a bright light of infinite mercy, a silver lining of love. A golden thread of grace runs through these threatening verses, for the Lord speaks of taking away the rebels from among His people, but all along, when He addresses the remnant of His people, His tone is that of grace. He solemnly threatens judgments, but these are preparations for mercy. He preaches to them by the prophet concerning mercy and judgment, blended in effectual working for salvation. Lovingkindness underlies and overlays His wrath. He puts on a frown in order to smile. He deals harshly with His chosen that He may deal safely with them, killing them that He may make them alive, piercing them with the arrows of conviction that He may pour in the wine and oil of His healing comforts.

The central part of my text is this—“*I will bring you into the bond of the covenant.*” I want briefly to explain what that means. Our second subject shall be *the method which God often pursues with men when He is bringing them into this bond of the covenant.* By terrible things in righteousness He saves those whom He determines to bring to Himself. When we have spoken upon that matter, our third point will be *the ultimate design of it all*—of His severity in leading them by so stern a way, and of His love in bringing them into the bond of the covenant. The design is, “You shall know that I am JEHOVAH.” Judgment and mercy are both intended to make men know in their inmost souls that He who thus deals with them is indeed the living God.

I. First, then, the MEANING OF BRINGING MEN INTO THE BOND OF THE COVENANT.

If we take the passage as referring to the work of grace, it signifies that *they shall know under what covenant they stand.* Beloved, there is scarcely a more important question for all of us than this, under which covenant do we live? Are we under law or under grace? By the very fact of our creation we are under bonds to our Maker to love and serve Him, and this is a form of the covenant of works.

In serving God we should have found happiness—in rebelling against Him we have found sorrow. Thus the covenant, which was bound up with the very nature of things, had its sanctions of reward and penalty. Without being strictly defined in words, the foundation of it was laid from the first. But God put it into words when He dealt with us in Adam our first covenant-head.

He was forbidden to eat of the fruit of one special tree, and he was warned that in the day in which he should eat of it he would surely die. This covenant was speedily broken, man being in honor continued not. Our whole race in Adam broke the covenant, and fell from its high estate. There we lie by nature, condemned under the covenant of works. Set forth as that covenant is in the ten commands of the law, it is as terrible as it is pure. The commandment is holy, and just, and good, but we constantly violate it. The perfect law has been broken by all of us, by some it has been violated openly by wanton, willful acts of rebellion, by all of us it has been broken in heart and will. He that breaks one link has broken the chain, he that is guilty of one command is guilty of the whole law, for it is one and indivisible.

Now, you that are under the law, hoping to be saved by your own works, see where you are. As many as are of the works of the law are under the curse, for “cursed is everyone that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.” Whatever excellences you may have, and you have many in the sight of men, yet if you are under that covenant of works your comeliness is turned into corruption. “This *do* and you shall live,” is no promise to you now, seeing you have failed to *do*, but it becomes to you a curse because of your transgressions.

But there is another and a better covenant, which is not a covenant of works at all, but of free, rich, sovereign grace. It was made of old with Christ the second Adam, our better Covenant-Head. Its tenor was on this wise—He shall obey the Father’s will, actively and passively He shall do and suffer the will of the Most High, and in doing so He shall save those whom the Father has given Him. A great multitude inherits the reward of Christ’s perfect obedience, for, being chosen by God, and having the Lord Jesus to be their Representative, they are made to live by His fulfilling and honoring of the law.

The great question for each one is—Am I under that new covenant? That covenant of grace and peace?—that covenant “ordered in all things and sure”? You can answer that question by this one, Are you in Christ Jesus? Are you resting wholly on Him alone? If so, mark this, the Lord has said, by His servant Isaiah, “I have given him for a covenant to the people.” If you have Christ you are in the covenant of grace. If you are trusting in Him, God has made with you an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, concerning which we read in your hearing just now, both in Jeremiah 31 and in Ezekiel 36.

Dwell on those covenant promises. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you,” and again, “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.” Oh, the blessedness of being under such a sure covenant! This is what is aimed at, that God may bring His own from under the law, and place them under the covenant of grace. Though as yet they care nothing about it, He will bring them to know and realize that they are standing in the covenant of grace, with Christ as their Covenant-Head. The drift of the inward work is to lead them to accept the gift of God, and so to come “into the bond of the covenant.”

They shall, secondly, be *led to see how this covenant binds them to God*. If you are in that covenant you belong to God, and He will have you, for the Christ will not shed His blood in vain, nor pay a ransom price for that which He will not possess. He will keep to Himself the spoil which He has taken from the hand of the mighty, and His Father will give Him to see of the travail of His soul, and to be satisfied. If you are in that covenant you belong to the Lord forever and neither shall it be possible for you to be your own, or to be the devil’s. You are “the sheep of His pasture, and the people of His hand,” and He will keep you as the apple of His eye, and preserve you as the jewels of His crown. You are bound to Him if you are in the covenant.

Do you wish to break that covenant? Do you wish to depart from the solemn obligations which that covenant of love casts upon you? Though this covenant be not of works, it produces more works than the covenant of works ever could do, for being saved by grace, it is written, “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for you are not under the law, but under grace.” Grace, and the gratitude which comes of it, form a firmer bond to hold the soul from straying than the hope of reward can possibly be, it is stronger than the fear of hell.

O, mighty grace, you do hold us with the cords of a man from which we never desire to escape. We are the Lord’s people, and He is our God. He holds us, and we hold to Him. He is our husband, and our hearts are knit to Him. The bond of the covenant unites us to the thrice holy God, and none shall break the sacred union.

To come under the bond of the covenant means also *to come under the discipline of the covenant*, for they that are in gracious covenant with God will find that He deals with them as with sons, and inasmuch as He loves them, they shall know the truth of that word—“As many as I love I rebuke and chasten.” “If they break my covenant,” says He, “I will chasten them with the rod of a man,” and again, “You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities.”

If you enter into covenant with God, and you turn aside even in little matters, you shall soon discover that the Lord is a jealous God. If you are sweet to God He will make sin bitter to you. He will not let you transgress as other men do. The goats may wander with impunity, but the sheep may not. God reserves the ungodly unto the day of judgment, but judgment begins even now at the house of God. His fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His floor if He purges nothing else. You cannot be in covenant with God and yet be let alone in your transgressions, for it is to the reprobate that He says, “Let him alone, he is given unto idols.”

The mark of God’s people is that if they sin they smart, and if they wander they are whipped back. Despondency, sickness, bereavement, loss, and even temporal death may fall upon the chosen as visitations of God to deliver them from the power of Satan. So, you see, it is God’s design to bring His people to know their covenant standing, to see how the covenant binds them to their God, and to feel

that this holds them under a holy discipline, such as God does not exercise upon the mass of mankind, but only upon “a people near unto him.”

Further, this coming under the bond of the covenant means surely that *they yield to its restraint*. I do not know how to give better expression to what I mean than by quoting the lines we often sing,

*“Oh to grace how great a debtor
Daily I’m constrained to be!
Let that grace, now, like a fetter,
Bind my wandering heart to Thee.”*

Can grace ever be a fetter? Oh, yes, it is the most blessed of all fetters, for it holds us fast, and yet never violates our liberty. It binds the very heart in willing captivity. This is the bond of the covenant. “Oh,” says one, “I do not want to be under any bond.” Then, in all probability, you are bound by the chains of self-will. In grace you can be under bonds, yet not in bondage. I am in the bonds of wedlock, but I feel no bondage, on the contrary, it is a joy to be so bound. The bonds of love, and the cords of a man, cause no chaffing.

The bond of grace is a marriage bond uniting us to Him whom we love above all, even the altogether lovely Bridegroom of our souls. It is our joy to look up to our Covenant-Head, and obey Him in all things. This bond holds us back from doing what it would be to our injury to do, it restrains us from sinning against God. Instead of wishing to be free of this bond, we desire to realize it in its most stringent form, by being crucified with Christ, nailed up hands and feet, so as to be incapable of following the wandering wishes of the unregenerate nature.

O, that we were utterly incapable of sin! Would God we were bound to holiness as with belts of steel. I hope many of you feel the blessed restraint of covenant relationship, so that you cry with Joseph, “How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” The love of Christ both restrains and constrains us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died, and that He died for all that they which live might not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him that died for them and rose again. Blessed bond of the covenant! Oh, to wear its easy yoke, and bow before its gentle scepter! The heart is never as free as when it is brought into complete captivity to the love of God. The true freedom of the will is freedom from sin. O, Lord, truly I am Your servant, You have loosed my bonds, and now I cry, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even to the horns of the altar.”

But surely, it means also *the security of the covenant*—“I will bring you under the bond of the covenant,” must mean, “I will bind you to the Lord Jesus, your Surety and Bondsman, and He shall secure you forever.” This covenant is everlasting, a covenant of salt, hence we sing,

*“This bond shall never break,
Though earth’s old columns bow;
Our sure foundations never shake,
We’re one with Jesus now.”*

One with Jesus we shall ever be, for who shall separate us? That is a blessed phrase which speaks of our soul being bound up in the bundle of life with the soul of the Lord our God. This is what the covenant has done for us—it has made us so one with Christ, and in Christ so one with the eternal Father, that it is written, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” Bound by everlasting bonds, who shall separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord? I cannot linger longer over the precious truth, but surely it is an unspeakable privilege to be brought into such a covenant-bond. I trust many of you know by experience what it means.

How earnestly I do pray that some who have been strangers to this matter may begin to spell it out this morning. Oh, you whom God means to save, I trust He has brought you into such a condition that you would give your eyes to come from under the covenant of works, since there is no salvation there.

You feel it must be grace alone that can save such unworthy creatures as you are, and though you cannot as yet see spiritual truth, you are longing and looking out for some ground of hope in the infinite lovingkindness and long-suffering of God in Christ Jesus. Well, be of good cheer, for I am going to talk to you now about the way in which God deals with many whom He brings under the bond of the covenant.

II. This is our second head, THE EXPERIENCE OF SOME IN COMING UNDER THE BOND OF THE COVENANT.

I do not want to be mistaken. I believe that many are brought under the bond of the covenant by very simple and gentle means, especially those who sweetly yield to the gentle drawings of the Holy Spirit. Very early in life some are brought to Jesus with little terror or distress of mind. Let them be very grateful for it. If you come to Christ I do not care how you come, for I am sure you could not have come at all if the Father had not drawn you, and if He has drawn you, there is no mistake in your method of coming.

If you have tasted but a little of the bitterness of sin because you have been kept from it by preventing grace, do not raise a question on that account. Though you may not have been made to sit and sigh in the blackness of darkness, it is enough if you now see the great light. The Lord, in great tenderness brings many of His children to Himself early in the morning, so early that they enjoy a long and blessed day in His service, and they are strangers to those broken bones which come of a long sojourn in the enemy's camp.

These Israelites to whom Ezekiel spoke had gone very far into sin, as far as ever they could go. They had been false to their promises, wicked in their lives, and rebellious in heart against their God. With many of this character the Lord deals with a singular severity of love. He strikes them with a sword, for so only can their sins be slain. Of those processes of grace we will now speak.

To begin, will you follow me in the text at the thirty-fourth verse? Here were a people whom God had chosen to be His own, but they had ignored that choice, and had said to themselves that they would be like the families of the countries, to serve gods of wood and stone. Many among those whom the Lord has chosen in His secret purposes are saying to themselves, "We will never belong to those religious people. We will never be called sanctimonious, hypocrites, Methodists, or Presbyterians." They have a perfect horror of being ridiculed for Christ's sake. These persons are for the present perfectly satisfied to take their lot with the multitude, distinguishing grace has no charms for them. Hear, then, what God will do with such if He means to bring them under the bond of the covenant.

First, *He will cause them to come out from their present company.* "I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out." You do not mean to quit your present settlement, but you shall come out of it once for all. You shall feel yourself to be as a speckled bird among your former associates. The Lord will make you to loathe the amusements which are now your delight, and the lusts of the flesh, which you now follow after as the fish hastens to the bait, shall become abominations to you. You shall find in your old sins such death and corruption that you shall turn from them as a man turns from a rotting carcass.

This God can readily enough accomplish by ways known to Himself. Your old friends will be without you, and what is more, they will not desire you to return to them. You shall be so miserable that they will be glad to be quit of you. As the wounded stag retires into the depths of the forest to bleed and die alone, because those which are not wounded roughly push at it with their horns, so it shall be with you. You shall prefer solitude to the galling words of the ungodly. If the Lord has chosen you and you have chosen sin, He will deal with you with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and make you know His fury against evil. His love to you shall show itself in wrath against your sin. You shall come to think of God as angry with the wicked every day, for so He is. You shall hear that sentence sounding in your ears, "If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he has bent his bow, and made it ready."

What is more, you shall not only read the words, but you shall feel the arrows of vengeance sticking fast in you, till you long to escape from your transgressions. The Israelites in Egypt for a time were glad to dwell there, and they began to worship the gods of Egypt. But presently God put it into Pharaoh's heart to oppress them, and he did so most grievously, and Israel had to make bricks without straw, till their bondage grew unbearable and they cried unto the Lord their God. He will make it so with you if you are one of His, for out of the Egypt of the world you shall come. You may get the flavor of the leeks and the garlic, and the onions of Egypt, upon your palate, and delight in it, but you shall yet be made to nauseate that wherein you delight, and long for heavenly manna, which you now despise. The Lord Jesus will seek out His own sheep, and separate them from all other flocks.

Note, next, that God said *He would bring them into distress and loneliness*—"And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people." It was not to be a wilderness, like the wilderness of sin where there were no inhabitants, but "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people." This is, indeed, a terrible wilderness, for you walk in the midst of crowds and yet you are perfectly alone. You mingle with the great congregation, and yet feel that none can enter into your secret. How wretched to sit here and feel that there is not another man like you in all this vast assembly. You have come into a howling wilderness wherein there is no water of joy, or track of hope.

Where now your mirth and giddiness? Where now your comrades in iniquity? The Lord can soon make the gay worldling into the desponding solitary. I have seen Him touch proud young men, and they have been brought to deep humiliation of spirit, so as to be glad to sit down like little children and learn the way of the kingdom.

Oh, you stiff-necked, hard-hearted sinners, if God's almighty love goes forth, He will soon turn these hearts of stone into flesh, till you become ready to weep yourselves away because you have grieved your Savior. Many here can remember when they were in that condition. When the ministry seemed a wilderness. They went up to hear the Word preached, and others were converted, but they were not. The Bible itself seemed to be a wilderness, when they read it they found no comfort. The Book appeared to thunder at them, great pieces of ordnance were fired against their consciences out of its law.

They turned to Christian friends, and sometimes to unchristian friends, but from neither the one nor the other could they obtain any help. No man understood them, they did not understand themselves, "They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in." Like the Jews in Babylon, they sat down and wept. Then was fulfilled in them this word, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people." This is God's way of bringing men to Himself. He digs them up by the roots, that He may remove them and plant them by the rivers of waters in the garden of the Lord.

Read on. What does He say next?—"and there will I plead with you face to face." Brethren, you that know what this means by experience, must help me out, for I cannot describe it in words. When the Lord becomes so realized to the guilty conscience that there seems to be nothing anywhere except God and that poor sinner, face to face with one another, then there is a time of fear and trembling indeed. For God to stand face to face with an unpardoned sinner, and plead with Him, is a matter of deep solemnity. Do you know it?

The sinner then cries out with Job, "I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear: but now my eyes see you. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If the Lord does but let loose His terrors upon men's minds, and deal with them hand to hand, then their beauty is consumed like the moth. The poor preacher tried often to touch their proud hearts, but he could not reach them. But when God comes by His Holy Spirit as a spirit of bondage, and begins to plead with them face to face, they are low in the dust right speedily. They know not how to answer the Lord for one of a thousand of the sins which He presses upon their consciences. When He lays judgment to the line, and righteousness to the plummet, the hail soon sweeps away their refuges of lies. If I could have been saved by finding one excuse for my sin when I was under conviction, I could not have discovered it. I was without excuse. I knew that I was guilty, and I wondered that I was not sent to hell there and then. When once God pleaded with me "face to face" there was no help for it but to plead guilty at once.

The Lord further declares He will *plead with them as He pleaded with their fathers in the wilderness*. How did He do that? Why, very terribly indeed. Certain men had rebelled against God and against Moses, and God said, "Hang up their heads in the face of the sun." At another time when certain of them rebelled against Aaron, the earth opened and swallowed them up, and Korah, Dathan, and Abiram went down alive into the pit. Once the Lord pleaded with them by sending fiery serpents among them, and multitudes were bitten and died. At another time the pestilence multiplied graves at each halting place. He brought them very low by these terrible pleadings! Had not Moses stood in the gap, as mediator, and had not Aaron intervened as a faithful high priest, they had been utterly consumed. Truly the Lord pleaded with them by terrible things in righteousness.

Beloved, broken-hearted hearer, are you passing through that stage? Is God pleading with you in that fashion? Does He bring judgment after judgment upon you? Do His threatenings follow each other like peals of thunder? Has He burned up all your comfort? Has He scorched and withered all your confidence? Are you brought unto the dust of death? Do you cry out, "My soul chooses strangling rather than life, day and night your hand is heavy upon me, my moisture is turned into the drought of summer"?

Believe me, you are not alone in such a dread experience, many of God's dear children have traversed this valley of death shade, and by this road they have been brought under the bond of the covenant. It is not that God loves to treat us thus, for He does not afflict willingly, but like a wise father He will not spare the rod and spoil the child. Self-confidence must be killed, carnal confidences must be destroyed, self-righteousness must be slain. The Lord will turn your sweetness into bitterness, and your light into darkness, that you may be fully weaned from your own ways, and may be made willing to be saved by sovereign grace.

What more does God do? Well, it is said, "*And I will cause you to pass under the rod.*" What is this passing under the rod? I have frequently seen sheep when the shepherd has required counting them. He makes them pass through a half-opened gate, and there he numbers them. They would all come rushing through, but the shepherd blocks the way, and as they come out one by one, he touches them with his staff, and so counts them. The Lord makes His chosen to pass through a narrow place, even a strait gate, where only one can come at a time, and there and then He counts them, and causes them to give an account of themselves individually.

You have been hidden away among the thousands, but now you shall be made to appear as a separate individual, and so you shall come under the rod of the Lord, and be numbered with His flock. Perhaps you are frightened, as the sheep are when the shepherd counts them, for they think they are all going to be killed. But there is far more room for comfort than for dismay, for that which God counts He values, and if He visits you with special chastisement it is because He has special designs of grace towards you which you shall understand by and by.

Then mark this, as the shepherd by counting his own sheep declares and exercises his right of possession, so the Lord, when He wakens up our minds to feel our personality, causes us to recognize that we are not our own, but are bought with a price. What a blessed knowledge that is when we discover that we are not our own, for in it lies the brightest hope for us. If I had been my own I should have been lost. It is because I am the LORD's that I shall not be lost, for He will not lose the Father's gift, or His own purchase. They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation, even as Jesus says, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." This is to come under the rod—to be counted one by one, and to be accounted to belong to God alone.

Moreover, we come under the rod of rulership, for a rod in the old time, was the usual scepter of kings. What a blessed thing it is when a man comes under the rulership of Christ, when he cries—

***"I yield—by sovereign grace subdued;
Who can resist its charms?"***

*And throw myself, by wrath pursued,
Into my Savior's arms.*

“I will bring you under the rod.” That is, “I will make you to yield willing obedience to My law and word.”

It means, also, the rod of chastisement. “Happy is the man whom God corrects.” Let the afflicted rejoice in his adversities instead of being cast down thereby, for “whom the Lord loves he chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.”

*“The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown.”*

“I will bring you under the rod.”

Now, have I been describing the experience of any person here? I feel sure I have. Thousands who will read these words will leap for joy as they exclaim, “This is precisely where I am. I said, ‘Surely He is going to destroy me,’ but if this is the way in which the Lord brings me under the bond of the covenant, I will ever bless His name.” May the Holy Ghost apply these my words to all the prisoners of hope!

III. But time fails me, so I must close by noticing THE ULTIMATE DESIGN OF ALL THIS.

This bringing them under the bond of the covenant has a grand intent in it.

The first design is evident in the text—it is *to bind them to God*. We should have gone astray long ago, and left our God entirely, if it had not been for our bitter experience when the Lord was making Himself known to us. All the better crops come in after-life from having a deep plowing before the seed is sown. I bear the scars of my terrible convictions about me to this day, and they prevent my trifling with sin. When I came to Christ my soul was stripped to the skin, not a rag of my own righteousness or of my own strength remained upon me. I was worse than a beggar. I was utterly destitute, and did not even know how to beg.

It seems to me that some of my brethren came to Christ with a good coat on, and have never ceased to wear it under their grace-given robes. Too many are unable to say, “Grace,” without stuttering, but when a man’s mouth has been washed out with the wormwood of self-humiliation, it is a fine thing for his pronunciation, he can say, “Grace,” I will warrant you, and give it a full emphatic sound.

If anybody had said to me, “You are a saved soul, and the Lord has put away your sin, but your salvation is the result of a good natural disposition,” I am afraid I should have proved the reverse by calling him a liar to his face. It would have angered me to hear such a falsehood. Grace alone has made me to differ, and saved me through faith in Christ Jesus. I cannot go any further, my brethren. My highly-intelligent, cultured brethren may go where they like, but I must abide with the doctrines of grace. The march of proud human intellect will end with the devil, but I am bound in all sincerity to continue where I began, namely, with free grace.

Where else can I go? Nowhere else is there for me a beam of light, or a ray of comfort. Rock of ages, I am secure on You! But once off that foundation I sink in a quicksand. Much of our smarting experience in coming home to God is meant so to bring us under the bond of the covenant that we shall never leave it again. We have had such a drilling and dressing that the very thought of any other salvation but that which is of grace is detestable to us.

The next design of God is that He may *entirely separate His people from the world*. “I will purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me.” When God makes His servants bitterly to know the evil fruit of sin, then they no longer hunger for that forbidden fruit. “Oh, you are straight-laced,” says one. Indeed we are where sin is concerned. A boy climbed into a neighbor’s garden, and stole unripe plums, and after eating them, he became very ill, and was forced to drink pints of horrible medicine to save his life. When he was better his school fellows said to him, “Come with us, and steal some plums,” but they seemed to be mocking him.

The boy is very straight-laced, is he not? He recollects the gripes and the pains which those plums brought him, and he will have no more of them. The burnt child dreads the fire. Thus the Lord often brings His people away from their sins by giving them sharp and cutting experiences of what evil will do for them. If such is the present consequences of sin, they begin to guess what sin will bring them when they come into judgment and condemnation on account of it.

Furthermore, the Lord chastens His people thus, *that He may bring them into their own land of promise* into the rest of His love. Whereas this text tells us of the rebels that they shall not enter into the land of Israel, it is implied that those who obey the divine command shall enter into the land of promise and peace. Blessed be God for the land of promise, into which we enter by faith! What a subject! I wish I had a week in which to preach upon it. When you quit the desert of Sinai, or the covenant of works, you enter into the land of promise, or the covenant of grace, and then you plead the precious promises of God, and realize the riches of His grace to the delight of your soul. Then is it true "so shall you dwell in the land, and verily you shall be fed."

But no man ever gets to live upon the promise of God till first of all he is weaned from all self-reliance, and all self-glorying. When God has stamped self with the seal of death, and we have seen destruction written upon all carnal confidence, then we are glad to accept as a gift that which we can never win as a reward. The table of covenant-grace is loaded when in all the land of human merit there remains not a morsel of bread. None so joyfully enter into the land of grace as those who are weary of the wilderness, and can find no rest in their own doings. As the way to Canaan was across a desert, so the way to the covenant is often by a bitter experience, and as the land that flows with milk and honey was all the lovelier because of the howling wilderness, so is grace all the more precious because of the utter failure of self.

Last of all, the great end of all is *that we may know the Lord*. I speak thoughtfully when I say I fear that large numbers of professors do not know the Lord. That is to say, the Lord JEHOVAH, as known to Ezekiel, is not known by many who profess to believe in the true God. JEHOVAH, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, but He is not the god of the nineteenth century. This generation has made a god of its own. The effeminate deity of the modern school is no more the true God than Dagon or Baal. I know him not, neither do I reverence him.

But JEHOVAH is the true God. He is the God of love, but He is also robed in justice. He is the God of forgiveness, but He is also the God of atonement. He is the God of heaven, but He is also the God who sends the wicked down to hell. We, of course, are thought to be harsh, and narrow-minded, and bigoted, nevertheless, this God is our God forever and ever.

There has been no change in JEHOVAH. He has revealed Himself more clearly in Christ Jesus, but He is the same God as in the Old Testament, and as such we worship Him. When a man has smarted because of his sin, and has been made to feel the burning coals of anguish in his own spirit, when the Lord has set him up as a target, and shot at him with arrows which drink up his life, and when afterwards he has been saved, and the splendor of infinite love has shone upon him, then he knows JEHOVAH.

When God has brought the contrite man into the place of security, comfort, joy, and delight in Christ Jesus, then he knows the Lord. The full-orbed Deity is beheld by the broken and contrite in the day of his deliverance, neither does he know which to adore and admire most, the power, the wisdom, the justice, or the grace of God. We love everything that is in God when we are brought under the bond of the covenant. May God bless this word to many sorrowing spirits, for Jesus' sake! Amen.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—
JEREMIAH 31:31-37; EZEKIEL 36:25-32; 20:32-44

HYMNS FROM “OUR OWN HYMN BOOK”—219, 228, 242.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.